

Observer: Mary Gavin

Began: 6 pm

Ended: 8 pm

Members present: Council Member Clare Kelly, Council Member Krissie Harris, Council Member Jonathan Nieuwsma and Economic Development Committee member Lisa Dzeikan in person; Council Member Bobby Burns via phone. Absent: Council Member Devon Reid, Council Member Melissa Wynne, Economic Development Committee member Eli Klein and Angela Pennisi (liaison from MWEBE Committee)

Staff present: Paul Zalmezak, Katie Boden and one more (Neal Reeves, I think).

CM Kelly chaired the meeting and called it to order just a few minutes after 6 pm. The minutes were not approved. All the other items were for discussion or communication.

- A. "Evanston Thrives" Retail District Action Plan Update and Retail Market Presentation Two representatives from Interface Studio's consulting team (one in-person and one virtually) presented business district strategy update and a summary of retail market trends. The strategy is called "Evanston Thrives." The lengthy presentation was an overview of what businesses want and need – a clean and inviting place in a cluster of businesses. They also noted that business vacancy rate in Evanston as a whole is 5%; in downtown Evanston it is about 12%. Members were invited to ask questions at any point, and EDC member Dzeikan made several salient points through her questions and comments:
- How does the vacancy rate in Evanston compare to that of other comparable suburbs? (The presenters did not have that information).
 - The downtown area needs to be cleaned up, as it is dirty and smelly. (The City has engaged a team to do that, and they will start soon, per Paul Zalmezak.)
 - Perhaps a field trip to Naperville would give EDC members some ideas of how Evanston's business districts can be improved.
 - The city could do something to enhance the experience of eating at a sidewalk café. Cement barriers, for example, detract from the enjoyment.
- B. Legacy Business Program Update For Discussion For Discussion Legacy Business Program Update
- CM Kelly said the program is going well and invited all interested parties to attend any of the meetings, which are held at 4 pm. every other Thursday in the Civic Center.
- C. Paul Zalmezak referred to the Economic Development Committee Report, a quarterly report detailing current, coming, leaving and closed (or departed) businesses in the city. No one spoke about it.

- D. Paul Zalmezak referred to a memo about a RISE (Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery) grant – a state economic program. Evanston Economic Development staff and the Rogers Park Business Alliance collaborated to submit an application. The Rogers Park Business Alliance received nearly \$100,000 for an economic recovery plan for the Howard Street Commercial Corridor. He said this was the “only RISE grant awarded in the Chicago area and is uniquely serving two municipalities.”

- E. Sustain Evanston Community Incentive Program Update – no comments

- F. Sidewalk Cafe Permit Memo Sidewalk Cafe Fees – Paul Zalmezak urged members to look at these, particularly in light of member Dzeikan’s comments.

The meeting was adjourned shortly before 8 pm.